

Open Letter to

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

Traian Băsescu, President of Romania

Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, Prime Minister of Romania

Academic rights in Romania

Your Excellences, fifteen years ago, when the revolution in 1989 demolished Nicolae Ceaușescu's dictatorship, a group of intellectuals expressed their concern about academic freedom and minority rights in Romania: they demanded the restoration of the Hungarian-language Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár. Now, the appeal is repeated because no progress has been made in achieving this aim.

This Hungarian-language university existed in Romania from 1945 till 1959 and its planned liquidation, by forcedly assimilating it into the mainly Romanian Babeș-Bolyai University, was one of Ceaușescu's personal political triumphs. Over the last fifteen years coequality in higher education could not be achieved and it is clear that the present structure does not serve the adequate training of Hungarian professionals in Romania. Although two private universities in Transylvania are sustained by the Hungarian government, Hungarians in Romania are heavily underrepresented in higher education.

There are successful examples of higher education in minority languages in Europe and elsewhere – e.g. Albanians in Macedonia, Catalans in Spain, Gagauz in Moldavia, Hungarians in Slovakia, Sámi in Norway, and Swedes in Finland who enjoy the benefits of a public (state-financed) university or universities in their own languages.

We understand Romania's pressing current problems but feel that in order to create a truly democratic society, the Romanian authorities should grant the minority rights mentioned above to the one and a half million strong Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania. We, therefore, urge that immediate steps be taken to re-establish the public Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca / Kolozsvár.

16th of February, 2006

Yours sincerely,

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